

Halloween Treats Can be Scary: DPH Tips for a Healthy Oct. 31

Dover – While the thought of getting tons of candy on Halloween night excites most children, it often terrifies their parents. Visions of all that sugar causing tooth decay and adding unnecessary pounds to both kids' and adults' waistlines can be frightening! Additionally, children with juvenile diabetes who need to manage their sugar and carb consumption may not be as thrilled to get a ton of chocolate. But there are healthy alternatives available for those who want to dish out more nutritionally balanced snacks instead of candy, that will still satisfy a child's sweet tooth. The Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH) encourages households to consider the following options:

- Mini boxes of raisins;
- Mini bags of fresh fruit and vegetables such as apples, grapes, carrots, or celery;
- Mini bags of dried fruit or vegetable "chips";
- Squeeze fruit, fruit chews, or fruit rolls;
- Mini bags of trail mix made with whole grain cereals;
- Peanut butter or apple sauce in single-serve containers;
- Individually packaged granola, cereal, soy, yogurt, and fig bars;
- Mini bags of pretzels, animal crackers, mini rice cereal or granola bars, or whole grain cheddar cheese crackers; and
- Small bottles of water and sugar-free hot chocolate packets.

If candy is served, choose bite-size candy bars that are lower in fat and sugar. Non-food treats have also become increasingly popular at Halloween. They include:

- Pencils, erasers, crayons, and coloring books;
- Stickers and tattoos;
- Glow sticks and glow bracelets;

- Play-Doh containers, play foam, and bottles of bubbles;
- Toothbrushes and tiny containers of hand sanitizer; and
- Coupons to a local yogurt store or a roller-skating rink.

Tips for trick-or-treating safety:

- Parents should walk with their children when trick-or-treating and stick to familiar neighborhoods. Do not let them go alone! Teach children never to go into strangers' homes or cars. In case young children become lost, put a name tag with two phone numbers on their costumes. Children should know their home phone number and how to call 911.
- Choose light-colored costumes that are labeled "flame-retardant," meaning the material will not burn. Add reflective tape to costumes and trick-or-treat bags. To prevent tripping, kids should wear athletic footwear, with pants and dresses hemmed. Costume glasses, hats, wigs, and beards should not cover eyes or mouths. Do not cover eyes or mouths with masks and instead use non-toxic face paint or make-up, testing it first on the child's arm.
- At home, turn on outside lights and remove any tripping hazards. Walk on well-lit sidewalks and driveways with flashlights. Use crosswalks and never assume that vehicles will stop for pedestrians. Insist that trick-or-treaters walk, not run or ride bicycles at night.
- Avoid candles and other flames, and unknown pets.
- Discard treats that are unsealed, have holes in the packages, are spoiled, or are homemade treats that were not made by someone you know. To prevent choking, do not allow young children to have hard candy or gum. To prevent over-eating and weight gain, store treats out of sight and dole out one or two daily.

And let's not forget Halloween safety for our pets.

- Halloween can be stressful for pets. Doorbells ringing and strangers coming to their doors make some pets very anxious. Make sure your pet has a quiet, safe place to retreat to if he or she becomes overwhelmed.

- Candy can cause illnesses, vomiting, and diarrhea in pets. Make sure you keep candy in a safe place out of your pets' reach. Don't let your children "share" their Halloween treats (especially chocolate) with the family pet.

- Pet costumes are cute, but make sure it's a good fit for your animal. Make sure the costume does not limit his or her movement, sight or ability to breathe, bark or meow. Check the costume carefully for small, dangling or easily chewed-off pieces that could present a choking hazard. And if you put it on and your pet seems overly anxious, then it's best to let them be their glorious selves!

For more Halloween health and safety tips, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/family/halloween/>.

A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind, or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, drink almost no sugary beverages.